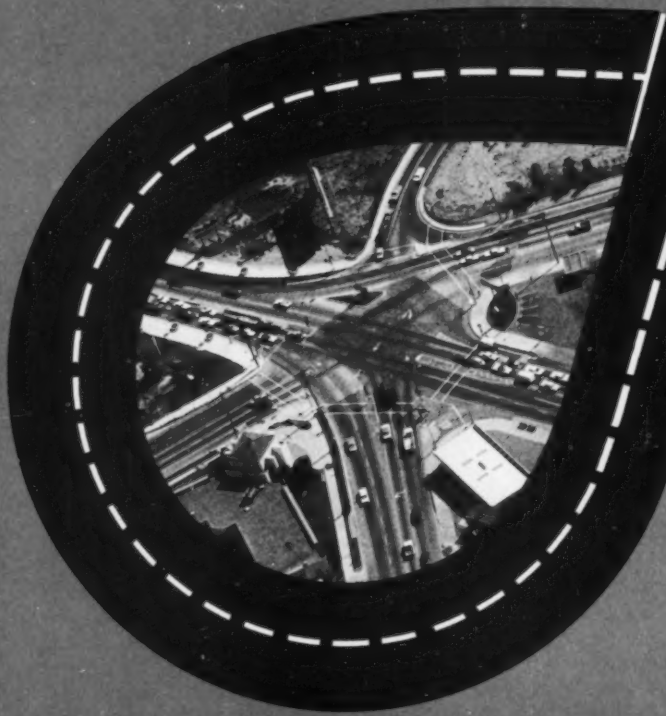
DRIVER

OUR SHORT ISSUE



. SHORT TRIPS
. SHORT TALES
and
. SHORT FUSES

JULY 1985

Start

Modern freeways are fast and convenient ways to get around the city. The amount of traffic using them makes it vital you remain alert and cautious at all times.

Know the names of the exits before and after the one you want, so you will know when to get in the right lane, or when you have gone too far.

SHORT TRIPS

Most accidents happen within 25 miles of home.

Perhaps you are vacationing close to home this year. Maybe you can only get a few days off, or you don't have a lot of money, or you simply don't like long drives. Or maybe you've already taken your one or two weeks and you want to take advantage of the good weather on summer weekends for some local travel.

Whatever your reason, you can have just as much fun going 20 miles to the lake for a day as you can driving 2000 miles to the Grand Canyon for a week. And short trips are easy. You can pack a minimum of stuff, just lunch and your recreational gear, and not be bothered with bringing suitcases along.

But what about the statistic that states most accidents happen close to home, within 25 miles? Obviously, the shortest trips — driving through town and driving around it — are also the most dangerous. Although short trips are usually quick and easy, it would be a mistake not to take them seriously.

If you'll be vacationing close to home, you may travel *around* town on the freeways, or *across* town on the city streets.

"AROUND TOWN"

Freeways. You either like them because they're convenient, or you hate them because they have traffic jams, or you might even be afraid of them.

However, freeways are safer routes to travel than most city streets. Statistics show most auto accidents happen at intersections, and freeways, whatever their hazards, don't have intersections. With the proper caution, you can make freeway driving a no-sweat experience.

Freeways, because they go in and around large cities, have more lanes, more exits and entrances and many, many more cars per square mile than interstate highways. It is the vast numbers of cars on them and the speed the cars travel that makes these routes hazardous. Yet they are convenient, providing easy and quick access to just about anywhere you want to go.

When you drive on a freeway, remember you must exercise care and alertness, despite the fact everyone is going the same direction you are.

Because freeways are sometimes difficult to enter and exit, you should plan your route. If you know the street names in the area of your destination, you can rely on the signs; there are plenty of them

Fast traffic moves in the left lane on the freeway, the middle lane or lanes are for through traffic, and the right lane is for the slow-moving traffic and those entering and exiting the expressway.

This interchange is a cloverleaf, so-called because it looks like one.

At highway speed you have gone too far to get on the exit ramp. Don't swerve to the right, and *never* try to back up on the freeway. Go to the next exit and backtrack.

to help. If you don't, get a map of the area and memorize the important exits around your destination, including the one just before and the one just after the one you want.

Bring the map along with you. If you have someone along who can serve as "navigator," have him or her watch for your destination.

GETTING ON

Possibly the trickiest part of freeway driving comes at the start — merging into traffic. Most freeways have acceleration lanes at the end of the on-ramps to provide the space necessary to get your car up the freeway speed. Then, all you have to do is move into a convenient space in the traffic flow.

Some people take on-ramps slowly, even stopping at the end of the on-ramp, thinking they need a very long gap in which to enter the traffic. But such gaps are not common, especially during heavy traffic hours. Further, the slower the car travels, the faster it must accelerate to get into the flow of traffic — not an easy job for today's less-powerful cars. To top it off, by hesitating, the drivers tie up those behind them who are also waiting to get on.

By the way, in case of severe traffic jams the cars move so slowly that you can still get in, by nosing over into traffic. Someone will let you in; they don't want to hit you any more than you want to be hit.

As you match your speed to the traffic, make quick glances back and forth to watch the road ahead and the cars on the freeway for your gap. Use your car's turn indicators to signal your intentions.

Use good judgment and don't try to force your way in where there isn't room. If you should get stopped at the top of the ramp and can't get in, you'll have to wait for that large gap, or for some kind motorist to move over.

Be especially careful at places on the freeway where an on-ramp acceleration lane leads directly to a deceleration lane for an off-ramp. Such places cause jam-ups because traffic criss-crosses and those trying to accelerate into the flow of traffic have to whip around those trying to get off the highway. If you know areas of this kind that commonly experience traffic snarls, avoid them.

continued

THE TRAFFIC SAFETY MAGAZINE FOR THE MILITARY DRIVER

JULY 1985

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Entered as a publication at the Second-Class rate (USPS No. 586-430) at San Bernardino Postal Service, 1331 South E Street, San Bernardino, CA 92403 and additional entries.

SUBSCRIPTION — DRIVER is published monthly and is available for sale by the Superindendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Back issues are not available. Changes in subscription mailings should be sent to the above address. Use of funds for printing this publication has been approved by Headquarters, United States Air Force, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. No payment can be made for manuscripts submitted for publication. Contributions are welcome, as are comments and criticism. Address all correspondence to the Editor, DRIVER Magazine, HQ AFISC/SEDD, Norton AFB, CA 92409.
Distribution: One copy for every 9 members of USAF.

ATTENTION DEPT OF THE NAVY PERSONNEL: Address all queries concerning distribution to NAVSAFECEN, NAS NORFOLK, VA 23511, Attn: Safety Publications Dept. All other correspondence will be welcomed by the Editor.

The purpose of this magazine is the prevention of vehicle accidents, and the contents are not directive unless so stated. Address reprint requests, stating intended use of material, to the Editor. The Editor reserves the right to make any editorial changes in manuscripts which will improve the material without altering the intended meaning.

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AFRP 127-1 VOLUME 19 NUMBER 2 JULY 1985

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Cars entering the freeway might cause you to slow down. To avoid this, and to help them get on easier, move over one lane when you can.

LANES

The most important thing you need on the freeway is some room to maneuver, so select the best lane. Freeway lanes work like this: The left lane is for the fast-moving traffic. The right lane is for the slow-moving traffic. The middle lanes, if any, are the "through lanes" for traffic that is continuing on rather than entering or exiting.

Pick the lane that will allow you the space you need and give the fewest problems.

If you don't feel comfortable on freeways, you might use the right or "slow" lane. Be prepared for the car ahead to slow for an exit, or for a car to enter on your right, or for a car on your left to move over to exit the freeway. In these cases, it might be easier to move over to give them room.

The left or "fast" lane is meant to serve also as a passing lane. Faster cars will use it to get around the slower traffic. Even if you're doing the legal speed limit, expect someone to tailgate you in the left lane. In these cases, it might be easier to move over and give them room.

Yes, we are in favor of using the middle lanes, or "through lanes," as they are also called. Traffic moves at the most consistent speed in them and there are more directions to go in the event of trouble.

But whatever lane you choose, always watch for any quick movements by other cars, and always plan for the unexpected by having an "escape route" in mind — a way to go in an emergency. Keep your speed steady and move along at the rate most of the other cars are going. This will maintain an even space between you and them.

PASSING

Passing another vehicle on the freeway is easy, with more than one lane moving in the same direction. But it is still important to use the turn signals to show your intention to pass or to change lanes, or to enter or leave the freeway. Remember to look over your shoulder in the direction you intend to move, to eliminate the blind spot not covered by your mirrors. Always cancel your signal after you make your move.

If you have to use one of those freeway interchanges with ramps leading to other freeways, make sure you get into the correct lane early, so you don't have to speed or dart into a small space between cars.

GETTING OFF

Most freeways will be well marked to give plenty of advance warning that your exit is coming up. Again, get into the exit lane early. This is the reason to memorize the names of the exits before and after the one you want. When you see a sign for the exit before, you know yours is coming up next. If you see the one after, you know you've missed it.

If you miss your exit, don't worry. Just go to the next exit and get off there. You can re-trace your route on the freeway, going in the opposite direction, or on the streets. If you have trouble, stop somewhere and ask for directions.

Once in a while — not too often, fortunately — someone will miss an exit and stop on the freeway to back up for another try. Just another of the dangers in the right lane.

Once you have reached the correct off-ramp remember to slow down to the speed posted on the ramp so you can negotiate the ramp safely, and so you will be prepared for the slower speeds of the city streets.

TROUBLE

Freeways are occasionally the scene of

continued

The side of the freeway is a dangerous place to try to make repairs if you break down. Go find a phone and call for a tow truck.

accidents, and accidents with that many cars around can be serious, or at least inconvenient. Watch far ahead to avoid getting into one that's already taken place. When you see brake lights flash on, slow down. If you pass an accident, watch the road and not the clean-up so you don't start *another* accident.

If your car breaks down on the freeway, get out and get away from it. Go find a phone and call a tow truck. Trying to work on your car on the shoulder of the freeway is too dangerous; many people are killed by careless (or drunk) motorists.

We want to stress attention again. When you're on the freeway, your attention should be directed totally on your driving. Too many people try to do other things while driving, like trying to remove a coat, or reach for something dropped on the floor, or roll down the window on the other side of the car, or look at the passenger while talking to him or her.

On the freeway, things happen too quickly to allow that kind of driving. Look across the hood, not inside the car.

"ACROSS TOWN"

Sometimes your short trip takes you directly through the city, where you may not usually go. There, you encounter people you may not usually have to contend with.

Difficult as freeway driving can be, city driving can be more difficult because of all the other people around you. You have much more to do than you have on a rural road, or on a super-highway. However, if you at all times consider what *might* happen, you won't be surprised or caught off guard by anything.

When you think of what might happen on a short trip, remember all the bad drivers out there — the ones who can't seem to hold their cars steady, who speed up and then jump on the brakes to avoid rearending another car, who turn without signaling, who tailgate others and then get upset when others do it to them, who do the thousand other things that annoy or endanger those around them.

HEAVY TRAFFIC

Intersections are arguably the most dangerous places on the road. The yellow, or amber, light is the key to what

continued

(top)
Watch for rapid lane changes by other drivers, and when you change lanes yourself always signal your intentions.

(left)
In the city, be especially careful at intersections. These are the most hazardous driving areas, because of the cars going in all directions.

Traffic signs can sometimes be confusing. Eliminate the chance of problems by planning your route and watching far ahead.

might happen there. When they see a yellow light (or even a red), some people floor their accelerators to speed through the intersection. Approach intersections carefully, and be ready to stop when you see a yellow, rather than racing through. (See "Intersection ESP" in last month's DRIVER for more on intersections.)

If you can, avoid the worst of the city traffic by simply not driving during the peak rush hours. But when you must, realize what will probably happen — getting stuck in traffic. When it happens, don't get angry. Relax, but stay alert and watchful. You will get to your destination as quickly as the one who weaves through traffic, tailgates others and loses his temper. Remember that rush hour also happens at the base, and entering and leaving the base at such times will require some patience.

Be prepared for unpleasant surprises in the city, like drivers opening their doors in front of you.

MOVEMENT

When trying to get onto a main street from a side street or from a parking lot, be patient and wait for a suitable gap to move into. If you bolt out into traffic, other drivers might make room for you if they can, but don't rely on their braking skill.

Right turns on red lights are allowed in most places in the U.S. — in some places at all lights, in others where a sign permits them, and in others where signs do not specifically prohibit them. When you make one of these turns, come to a complete stop, check the cross traffic to your left, and make the turn only when you will not interfere with traffic movement.

Other drivers might make these turns without fully stopping and accelerate into small gaps in traffic, so watch for them.

When you make a lane change, consider that another car might try to get into your chosen space before you. Signal your intentions, and look over your shoulder at your target lane instead of relying solely on your mirrors.

Obey all the speed limits at all times. They are meant to move traffic efficiently and safely. Keep your car at or below the speed limit and watch for anything that makes slowing advisable, like those who

ignore the speed limits.

CONSULTATIONS

A good way to check what might happen is to consult your car's mirrors. Look at the windshield mirror and the side mirrors frequently to see any quick movements of other cars. When you move don't rely totally on those mirrors, but turn your head and take a direct look to see what was hidden in your blind spot.

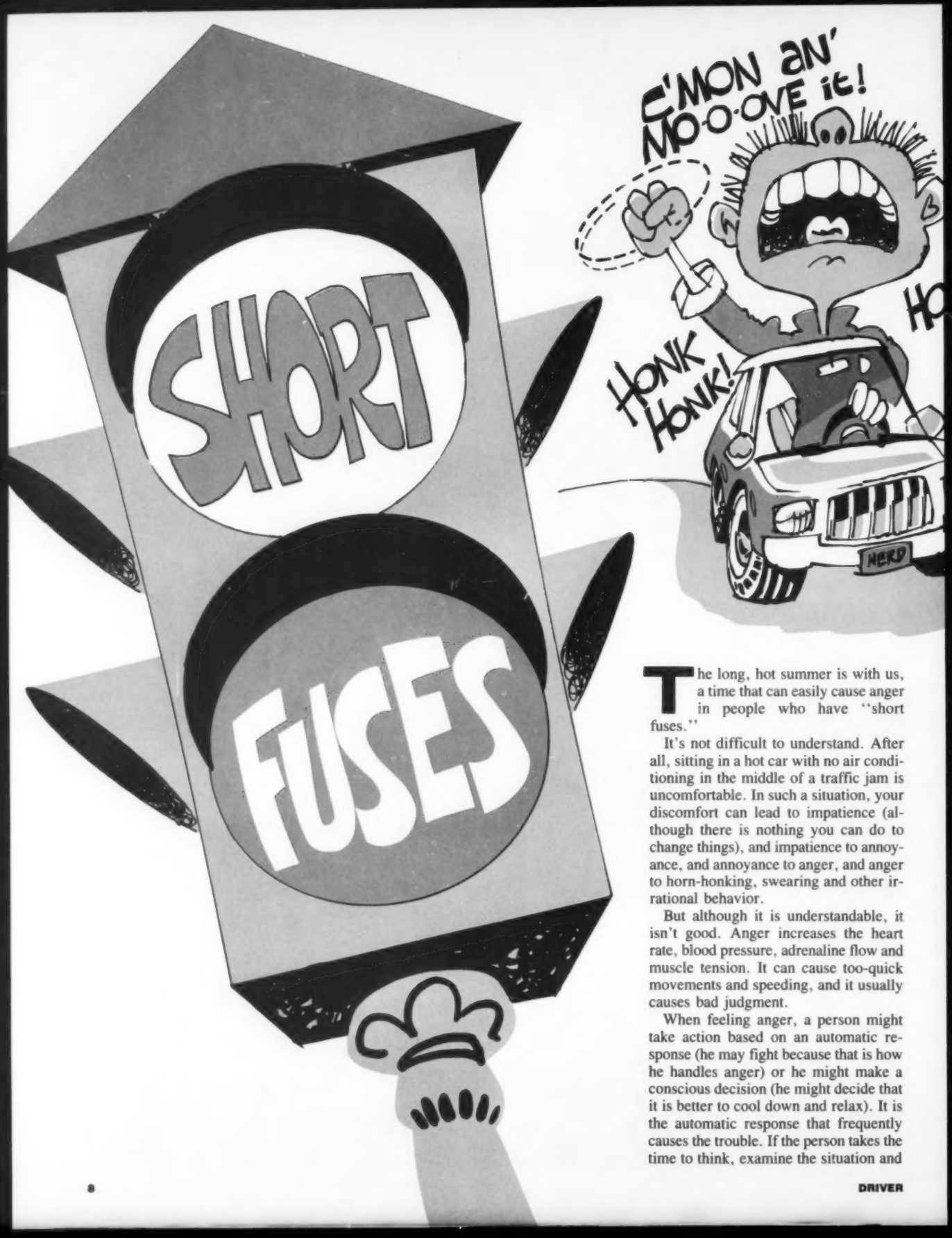
Know all the street names around the place you are going, so you can easily consult your map if you get confused. Check the map only while parked, not while driving. Don't drive slowly up the street, holding up traffic as you look for the place you want.

If you get stuck in one of the miniature traffic jams in a parking lot, expect other motorists to try to get into any gap barely large enough for a bicycle. Move slowly and carefully and be patient. Anger will not get you to the exit any faster.

The worst thing that might happen is a collision. To insure your safety, wear your car's seat belts at all times, whether you're going *across* town or *around* town. As we said, most accidents happen on short trips, sometimes on a trip around the block. If you leave your belts rolled on the take-up reel, you'll need them when you least expect it.

Make a full stop when you do a right turn on a red light and watch for cars close enough to present a hazard before you start the turn.

On the through-town drive, try to drive at times other than rush hour.



The long, hot summer is with us, a time that can easily cause anger in people who have "short fuses."

It's not difficult to understand. After all, sitting in a hot car with no air conditioning in the middle of a traffic jam is uncomfortable. In such a situation, your discomfort can lead to impatience (although there is nothing you can do to change things), and impatience to annoyance, and annoyance to anger, and anger to horn-honking, swearing and other irrational behavior.

But although it is understandable, it isn't good. Anger increases the heart rate, blood pressure, adrenaline flow and muscle tension. It can cause too-quick movements and speeding, and it usually causes bad judgment.

When feeling anger, a person might take action based on an automatic response (he may fight because that is how he handles anger) or he might make a conscious decision (he might decide that it is better to cool down and relax). It is the automatic response that frequently causes the trouble. If the person takes the time to think, examine the situation and

make a conscious decision, he or she may avoid the trouble.

Consider this example: A man was driving his car in the middle lane of a freeway in moderate traffic when a car in the left lane zipped over in front of him to get around another car, and roared off. The man, angry at being cut off, accelerated to chase the speeder. After a moment he mentally asked himself "What am I going to do when I catch him?" When he couldn't find a useful answer to that question he slowed down and decided to watch more carefully for careless drivers in the future.

That example is fairly common; almost everyone has had an experience similar to it. But anger can go further, to the point of being very dangerous to peoples' safety.

Take this rather stark example: A van and a car were both moving through a parking lot looking for an exit. The van had to stop quickly to avoid the car. The driver of the van emerged from his vehicle and swore angrily at the car driver. The car driver also became angry and they argued. When the van driver threatened him, the car driver tried to run the man down with his car. Fortunately, the van driver got out of the way.

People have even been known to use firearms in incidents as minor as having someone cut in front of them in a line at a gas station. The Roman poet Horace expressed it well: "Anger is a short madness."

Emotional stress simply adds to the stress that is part of driving — tension, tight muscles and even eyestrain. Good driving requires quick reflexes, good coordination and constant alertness. It is not aided in any way by excessive emotions, especially anger.

We all get angry and, whether we admit it or not, we all occasionally become angry when we drive. An important question is "How can I control the anger so I don't do something foolish and bend up the car?"

The best way is to avoid situations that will cause anger. If being hurried or stuck in a traffic jam annoys you, don't let it happen if you can. If you can't avoid the anger-causing situations, watch yourself. Don't let your anger build up to a crisis point. Deal with it while you are still just annoyed and don't let it go until you are furious.

When you feel your anger building, look for the cause and ask yourself if there is anything constructive you can do to change the situation. If there is, do it. If not, calm down and concentrate on your driving.

Learning to control anger involves a certain amount of discipline, looking for constructive ways to manage it. If you get in your car and drive to blow off steam you will tend to drive fast and recklessly. Instead, use physical recreation to blow off excess energy. A workout or a run around the track or a fast game of handball will get your mind off your problems, and it'll make you physically and emotionally more relaxed.

For times when anger appears, you must develop conscious control, and this is where the discipline part really comes in. Mark Twain said (humorously, of course), "When angry, count four; when very angry, swear." It would probably be better to change the feeling by doing something different than what you feel. If you feel angry, try smiling.

Look at it this way: It couldn't hurt.

TRUE ACCIDENTS

Following are a few reports of accidents involving Air Force members. We have removed names and references to dates and places.

ALCOHOL/EJECTION

Two airmen were driving in a pickup truck on a straight road toward their overseas base at about 0300 hours. A witness heard the sound of skidding tires and saw the truck flipping over several times. Both airmen were thrown from the vehicle. The truck came to rest upside down on a grassy area. The driver was lying about 40 feet from the truck. He suffered a broken leg. The passenger, found lying 25 feet farther away, was pronounced dead at the hospital at 0435. Emergency aid personnel smelled the strong odor of alcohol on both airmen. Neither had worn seat belts.

CHANGING A TIRE

An airman was changing a flat tire on his car, which was parked off the north side of a highway, at about 1950 hours. An oncoming car failed to negotiate the curve and went off the road, striking the car and then the airman. He was declared dead in the hospital at about 0015 the next morning.

ALCOHOL/TREE

An airman attended a professional football game with several friends one evening, during which they drank alcohol. Later at one friend's home, the airman drank more alcohol and had a sandwich. He left the house at about 0015 to go to his parents' home. On the way, he apparently lost consciousness at the wheel, ran off the road on a curve and hit a signpost and then a tree. Police estimated the vehicle's speed at 45 mph in a 30 mph zone. He was not wearing the available seat belt and shoulder harness. He suffered multiple facial, head and abdominal injuries and received a permanent partial disability.

AIRBORNE

A technical sergeant left a bar at 2130 hours after spending about five hours drinking. He drove south at high speed on a highway. It was raining and the highway commonly flooded in the rain. He ran a red light, and about 1000 feet later lost control of the car. The car skidded onto a median and then became airborne. It landed, passenger side down, on top of a northbound car. Both cars were extensively damaged, and the northbound car's driver received minor injuries. The technical sergeant, who had not worn his seat belt, was thrown out and fatally injured while the car was airborne.

EXTREME FATIGUE

An airman worked his normal day shift and later attended a party from 1900 to 0300 hours, where he did some light drinking. He left around 0300, presumably to return to his quarters, but for some reason drove away on an interstate highway. Sometime around 0700 he was 180 miles from the base, traveling south. At an overpass to a county road, the car left the right side of the highway at around 70 mph. It traveled almost 600 feet, became airborne, landed on its top, skidded on the lower road and collided with an embankment. The airman was killed instantly. The car was in good condition and there was no evidence of braking or steering before the crash, so authorities concluded the driver fell asleep and ran off the road at high speed.

ALCOHOL

A captain was riding in a car driven by a civilian friend, traveling east at 55 mph on a two-lane highway at about 2050 hours. Neither was wearing a seat belt. The car drifted across the center line and was hit by an oncoming car. They were both hospitalized with critical injuries, and the captain died five days later. The driver had a Blood Alcohol Level (BAL) of .127, and the captain was at .276 BAL.

SEVEN PASSENGERS

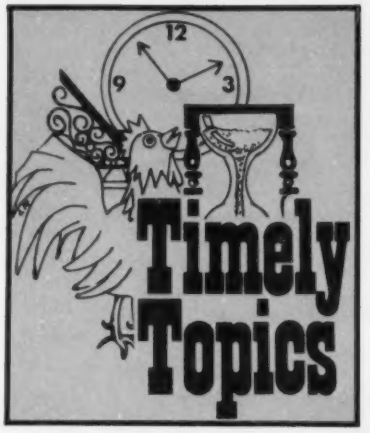
Six airmen and a civilian got in one car at 2030 hours to go to a party on the far side of an overseas base. Two of the airmen sat in the right side bucket seat, and the other four passengers got in the back seat. The driver and four of the others had been drinking before they started the trip. The car followed a slower moving vehicle for about half a mile, and then accelerated when the other vehicle pulled off the road. It entered a right hand curve traveling at 50 mph. The curve was posted with a limit of 20 mph. The car hit the left curb, went out of control and rolled two and a half times, landing on its top 138 feet away from where it had left the road. The driver died of massive internal injuries. The two passengers in the right bucket seat were hospitalized, one with a broken back, and the back seat passengers were treated and released. The driver's Blood Alcohol Level was .157, well over the legal limit of intoxication.

ALCOHOL/BLOWOUT

Two airmen were returning to their base on a four-lane divided highway at 2045 hours after a weekend in a city 200 miles away. Neither airman was wearing a seat belt. About 25 miles from the base, they passed a witness who said they were going well over the 55 mph speed limit. While they were in a right hand curve, the right front tire blew out and the driver lost control. The car went off the left side of the road, across the grass median and the opposing lanes, and then down a steep embankment. It flipped end-over-end several times and came to rest 500 yards from where it left the road. The passenger was ejected from the car while it was going down the embankment, and the driver was ejected when the car came to rest. The driver slid, face down, across a paved access road and came to rest 100 feet away from the car. He was dead at the scene. The passenger was in a coma in the hospital. The driver's Blood Alcohol Level (BAL) was .22, over twice the legal definition of drunkenness, and the passenger's BAL was .212. Police found numerous beer containers in the car and along the accident path.

TELEPHONE POLE

An airman left base after his duty shift at about 0012 hours. He arrived at a local bar at 0030, where he drank six to eight beers in the next hour and a half. He left the bar at 0200. At about 0330 he was attempting to take a left hand turn on a city street at high speed when he lost control and hit a telephone pole broadside. He died in the hospital six days later from massive head and internal injuries.



AAA DELEGATES ADOPT POLICY ENDORSING POLICE CHECKPOINTS

The American Automobile Association has approved a policy supporting police checkpoints as an effective deterrent in the fight against drunk driving.

The police said checkpoints may not yield more arrests for drunk driving but they increase the perceived risk of arrest, making them effective in reducing the number of alcohol-impaired drivers on the nation's roads. In 1984, an estimated 23,500 alcohol-related fatalities occurred in the United States.

The resolution recommends that police checkpoints be:

- Tightly controlled to conform to legal standards;
- Strictly supervised and monitored by responsible officials;
- Nondiscriminatory — occurring at times and locations reasonably calculated to apprehend DWI violators;
- Designed and conducted so as to avoid traffic congestion; and
- Well-publicized in advance.

Properly conducted and controlled checkpoints are far less intrusive than typical security checks at airports and some public buildings, the motoring federation said.

AUTO SAFETY TRIVIA QUIZ

While many cars of the past bear little resemblance to the cars we drive today, you may be surprised at how long ago many auto safety innovations were introduced, says the Automotive Information Council.

Check your knowledge with this short auto history quiz:

1. What was the first year rear view mirrors were available on American cars? a) 1916 b) 1935 c) 1957

2. When were back-up lights first introduced on an American production automobile? a) 1921 b) 1926 c) 1940

3. In what year were power brakes first available on a car built here in the U.S.? a) 1930 b) 1944 c) 1962

4. When were the first energy absorbing steering columns introduced on most makes of domestic automobiles? a) 1969 b) 1973 c) 1967

5. What year were auto safety belts first available on an American made automobile? a) 1950 b) 1961 c) 1966

6. In what year were auto restraint shoulder belts first introduced by an American automaker? a) 1973 b) 1957 c) 1968

ANSWERS

1. (a) Rear view mirrors were available on several makes sold here in 1916.

2. (a) During the 1921 model year a back-up lamp, that turned on automatically when the car was reversed, was available on the Wills-St. Claire.

3. (a) Vacuum assisted power brakes were made available by Cadillac in 1930.

4. (c) Energy absorbing steering columns were first offered on most American made cars in 1967.

5. (a) Nash-Kelvinator installed the first seat belts on the Rambler in 1950.

6. (b) Shoulder belts were first available from Chevrolet as early as 1957.

GRAY MARKET HEADACHES

Buyer's beware! Gray-market imported cars are not always bargains. They can bring big headaches, says the Automotive Information Council (AIC). Refitting a car to U.S. specifications can be expensive.

Gray-market import cars are generally the more expensive European cars brought into this country legally, but outside the normal factory-authorized distribution channels.

It is a growing market. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly 35,000 cars entered the U.S. through unofficial channels in 1984. Motor Trend magazine has predicted gray-market imports will reach 50,000 this year.

Due to the strength of the U.S. dollar, comparable models can be purchased in Europe at prices below most sticker prices here. The companies or individuals that buy the expensive European cars and ship them here are supposed to convert them to U.S. emission and safety standards before selling them to consumers.

The National Automobile Dealers Association surveyed nearly 400 Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Porsche and Jaguar dealers in the U.S. and found that only five percent of the gray-market cars brought to these dealerships were in compliance with U.S. emission standards and only one percent of these cars could meet all American auto safety standards. Some vehicles had improper emission modifications that could cause vehicle fires. In others, side door reinforcement was missing. A New York *Times* article cited instances where used cars were described as new or nearly new.

Some franchised dealers have refused to service gray-market cars and most manufacturers will not provide warranty coverage for gray-market vehicles. Insurers and banks are concerned about the car's true value and may be hesitant to finance or insure the vehicles.

TOUCH-UP TIPS

Small dings and scratches in your car's finish let in moisture, which when combined with oxygen can cause the metal underneath to rust. A deep scratch can develop into a major repair if it is not taken care of quickly.

Before using any type of touch-up paint, you must clean dirt and rust from the surface around the nick or scratch. Paint won't adhere to a dirty surface or stop rust; it will only hide the problem for a while. For a large rust repair, sand down to the base metal using a fine grade of sandpaper. For a small scratch with some rust present, try to chip off the rust with the edge of a razor blade.

Mask the area around the scratch to protect the windows, chrome, tires and trim from excess paint. Use newspapers and hold in place with masking tape.

On a larger rust repair that requires sanding the paint surface down to the bare metal, the first coat of paint should always be a primer. This protects against further rust and gives a smooth surface for the final coat of paint to adhere to. Follow the directions on the label and allow enough time for the primer to dry before applying the final coat of paint.

To check the color match of any touch-up paint, spray or brush a small amount inside a door jamb. For a spray type paint, use several thin coats rather than one heavy coat. For a small paint repair that does not require sanding down to the bare metal, use a small bottle of touch-up paint and a brush. Dab on the paint and let it run into the scratch.

Let the renewed finish set before using a rubbing compound to blend in the new paint with the rest of the finish. Finally, give the car a good coat of wax, says Automotive Information Council.

"They Won't Get Me, I'm an NCO"

by SSGT GEORGE DeLa PAZ and SP4 GAIL CARNAKI
reprinted from 10th Transportation Battalion Safety Newsletter
Ft. Eustis, Virginia

How wrong I was. Pull up a chair, sit down and let me tell you what happened to me, an NCO.

I got caught driving under the influence on post. My driving privileges on post were automatically suspended for one year, before I even went before a judge. Now I have to walk or ride my 10-speed bicycle to work. My company commander chewed me out. If it were not for my previous good record he would have had no choice but to take UCMJ action against me. With this package I also got a letter of reprimand from the CG, Bn Cdr, and my CO. These letters are put in my file for a period of two years or indefinitely, so I know my chances are slim for promotion and reenlistment.

Not only did I let down my subordinates, superiors and the United States Army, but worst of all I let down my family.

My company commander referred me to an alcohol-drug program which might take up to 16 weeks to complete. If I fail or have a negative attitude towards the program then UCMJ action awaits, plus possible separation from the Army.

I also have to attend a remedial driving training course which has to be done on off duty hours, my time.

Once I appear before the judge and he finds me guilty (which he will) then I will be fined $300, $25 for court costs, probation for one year, revocation of my driver's license for six months (first offenders) and my suspended license for on post is now revoked for one year.

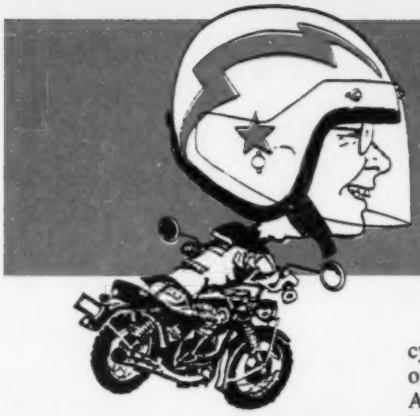
In addition to the alcohol program (on post) I am also referred to another one (off post) which costs $250 to attend. Double jeopardy laws do not apply. Both the military and civilian authorities will get their share of my time and money.

Then my case is sent to state Department of Motor Vehicles for administrative action. DMV will agree with the court, but will also add demerits to my record and report my DUI to my insurance company. This will inevitably raise my insurance sky high. Some insurance companies have been known to drop individuals with DUI's or refuse to cover them.

Once my license revocation has expired (on post and off post) I don't automatically get it back. I have to request my license to be reinstated. This request will be granted only if I have completed the alcohol-drug programs on and off post and the remedial driving training course, and paid a reinstatement fee of $30 to DMV. Also I will be put on probation for one year and will be scheduled to appear in court at the end of that year.

This is what has happened to me and what is going to happen to me because I got caught DUI. The damage that I could have done behind the wheel of my car while intoxicated is much more frightening than this. I could have maimed or even killed someone! I was lucky. I *only* received a DUI.

So I ask you, is it worth it to drink and drive? You are taking a risk and the stakes are much too high. You may not get off as easy as I did. You may spend the rest of your life with your conscience bothering you because you killed someone while drinking and driving. The automobile has become deadlier than the gun. THINK before you get behind the wheel of your car.



IN FAVOR OF MOTORCYCLES

by MSGT. DONALD R. PETRON
McClellan Air Force Base, California

About the author: MSgt Petron is a 19-year veteran of the US Air Force. He has ridden motorcycles, from 100 cc up to 750, throughout the United States and in several foreign countries. He is currently stationed at McClellan AFB, near Sacramento, California, serving as Public Affairs Representative for the 1849th Electronic Installation Squadron. And still riding.

Picture a traffic jam: Morning or evening rush hour, a big shopping center just before Christmas, a major league stadium after the biggest game of the season. Cars are lined up solid, bumper to bumper, stop and go, creep and crawl. And moving gingerly through the whole mess are a few brave souls on motorcycles. Sneaking down the shoulder, weaving through lines of cars, squeezing in and out of every little space, they leave the crowd behind.

The reaction of the drivers in the cars is predictable, almost universal: "Those #@%&* motorcycles! They shouldn't be allowed on the road."

They shouldn't? Let's think about that.

If each person on a motorcycle were driving a car instead, the traffic jam would be a whole lot worse. On the other hand, most of the cars in the crowd have one person in them — the driver — and four or five empty seats. Many more have a single passenger. If each of those were replaced by a motorcycle (with or without a passenger), *there wouldn't be a traffic jam*!

Compare the average car and the average motorcycle. Two motorcycles will fit comfortably in the space occupied by a single car. Further, motorcycles get better than twice the gas mileage while emitting less than half the exhaust. A half-dozen motorcycles can be made from the material it takes to make a single car. Judging strictly by the numbers, a motorcycle is clearly more efficient as a means of moving one or two people from point A to point B. And when they get to point B, the motorcycle will take up less space in the parking lot.

If all the cars carrying only one or two people were replaced by motorcycles carrying one or two people, a multitude of problems would be solved. There would be no more traffic jams, no more crowded parking lots, much less smog. Following the laws of supply and demand, the price of gasoline would drop dramatically, as would the cost of aluminum, steel, rubber, and glass. Projecting far into the future, a lot of oil refineries could be converted to amusement parks and a lot of giant junkyards would shrink into insignificance.

"But motorcycles are dangerous!" Yes, they are. So are electric drills and deep-fat fryers. Everything in the world is potentially dangerous in some way or another. But we still manage, somehow, to drill holes and fry potatoes safely most of the time.

When a motorcycle tangles with a car, the biker loses — period. But the whole idea here is to decrease the number of cars. This will give everyone, including the bikers, more room, more clearance, and a safer environment in general. (Of course, those ditches, trees, and utility poles will still be there.)

Carrying all this to its logical conclusion, the world would be safer, cleaner, cheaper, and much less crowded if everybody who drives alone in a car would ride a motorcycle instead.

Obviously this isn't going to happen. The odds that every solo driver will switch to a motorcycle are even less than the odds that he will fill up his four or five empty seats. Either of those alternatives would go a long way toward improving the situation, and neither is likely to happen.

So what's the point of this argument?

There are several. If you ride a motorcycle, you must know what those guys in the cars think of you when you do crazy things around them. You, personally, may feel completely at ease, but you must also consider that your movements may be scaring the wits out of everybody else. Ride courteously, cautiously, safely.

And ride proudly, fully aware that you are doing the world a favor by conserving roadspace and resources. Keep your bike in good repair, and use your turn signals faithfully, your horn sparingly. Keep your exhaust system tight, since nothing is more irritating than high rpm's through holey pipes. In short, be a good neighbor.

If you drive a car, you might consider the benefits of the motorcycle for solo transportation: economy, agility, convenience. (Not to mention fun.) You could easily buy a brand-new motorcycle for much less than what you would pay for an old jalopy as a "second car." If riding is just not for you, at least be considerate to those guys on two wheels. Whether by choice or by necessity, they are doing you a lot of favors: Using less space, burning less gas, making less smoke, consuming smaller quantities of manufacturing materials.

While you are leaning back in your plush-lined, climate-controlled, four-wheeled steel box, they are perched precariously on two narrow tires, fully exposed to the elements. They are kept upright by nothing more than gyroscopic forces, which fall to zero when their wheels stop turning. Help them to keep those wheels turning whenever you can. Give them room to maneuver — at least as much space as you would give to an automobile. If they occasionally take advantage of their small size to squeeze by, don't begrudge them the tiny sliver of space they have borrowed. And when you get to the next shopping center, and you have to park a hundred yards from the stores, try not to be too angry at all those motorcycles tucked into the triangular nooks and crannies around the front door. Because if they had all driven cars instead, the lot would be twice as full. And you might have to park *two* hundred yards away.

. . . move around inside the vehicle to try to get the bright light out of their eyes . . .

. . . others attempt to block the sun with their hands . . .

There are times of sun comes right th shield directly into times some people

in your EYE

. . . while others knee steer to put on their sunglasses which they think will help.

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"Why don't they just use their sunvisors?" you might ask. As you can see, they can't because these useful devices are already employed as storage areas for everything from cigarettes to maps.

OR NOT TO SWEAT

by AK2 TERRY P. RYAN
Attack Squadron One Nine Two
FPO San Francisco 96601

The searing heat of the San Joaquin Valley in July and August assure you that your decision to buy a used 750 Kawasaki instead of a car was the right choice. You feel pretty confident after two weeks on your new toy and the eight-hour Motorcycle Safety Course you participated in on your Naval Air Station. Helmet, long pants, high-top boots, and long sleeves are required while riding onboard the base. Remember what your Motorcycle Safety Instructor said, "Always dress for the crash!"

That phrase sings in your head but doesn't comfort you from the enormous amount of perspiration your body is producing underneath all that gear with the temperature struggling to reach 115 degrees. Solution to this problem? Sure, that's easy. Seventy-five mph vice 55 mph on your ride to work makes things a tad bit cooler while cutting your travel time by a third. Almost 30 miles in just over 15 minutes. You can handle that. Besides, no Highway Patrol cars bother with the back roads . . . right? Wrong! Okay, you get pulled over for 70 mph in a 55 zone. Forty-dollar ticket. No sweat! Better than 30 minutes of sweat a day. After all, when your squadron night

check gets off work it's cool enough to wear your "battle dress" home with no pain, or sweat.

Off base and at home it's a different story. A cruise to the local park or a few minutes to the corner store for a six-pack require nothing more than a pair of shorts, sneakers, and your shades. Now you're cool!

So, today's Saturday . . . no work. The little mishap you had last night on base when a car cut you off and made you dump your bike is in the past. After all, the bike only received a few small scratches. The pants and jacket you were wearing were remnants of your old wardrobe so the rips in them didn't much matter. Now it's down to the corner store for that six-pack. Oops, almost forgot your shades. Gotta look cool and they keep the bugs out of your eyes. Slide on your Nikes and it's off you go. The warm wind over your bare legs and chest gives you goose flesh. You have mastered the art of getting to 55 mph between stop signs while being able to slow down to just above the legal limit should a cop pop out from nowhere. So here's 55 on your speedometer. You ease off the throttle and look up just in time to see a stalled car 50 feet in front of you. Think fast! You can't countersteer. A line of parked cars is on the right and an oncoming semi to the left. Thirty-five feet to go now. Lay it down nice and easy. Just like last night. Your needle dives to 40, then to 35 as you lay your bike down. Easy as pie till your leg reaches the asphalt. Pain rips through your whole body as road rash starts to take its early fee. Next comes the disintegration of your nylon shorts and the rubber sole of the Nike between the bike and pavement fuses to the foot peg from the friction. The road rash on your legs is nothing to what it did to your back, chest, arms, and face. This too seems like nothing when you and your bike make contact with the stalled car's rear bumper. Thanks to the improvised brake you used, your skin, you have now slowed down to 20 mph. This is the speed your face meets the bumper. Guess who wins? In just three seconds it's all over, but that's when the pain really starts.

The Deputy that reaches you about 10 minutes later after fighting through the gathering crowd can't believe you're still alive. Only 60 percent of your skin is left on your body. The rest forms a 35 foot skid mark behind you. This, not to mention the shattered remains of your face, and the fact that you left your wallet at home makes it hard to identify who you are. But wait. What about your license plate? The Deputy runs a check on it to find that the registered owner is 6'4" with blond hair. You are 5'10" with black hair. And you were going to go down to the DMV on Monday to transfer the registration to your name. Luckily, you have a base sticker on what's left of the front of your bike. The Deputy runs the sticker number through Base Security but the reply he gets makes matters worse. The sticker is registered to a 1978 Volkswagen. You meant to get a temporary base sticker last night but without proper registration, no pass. You just had to ride your bike to work, so about a week ago you borrowed a friends base sticker that was on an "easy to remove" metal plate. As the medics put you in the meat wagon your roommate happens to drive by and stops. At least now the authorities know who you are. Explaining to your Commanding Officer why someone else's sticker was on your bike is the farthest thing from your mind now.

This little scenario may just sound silly to some, sick or stupid to others. But what would you do after eight months in the hospital and a few dozen operations only to find out that the Navy has found you negligent in your safe riding precautions and refuses to pay the $50,000 medical bill? No sweat? Not anymore. You just "no sweated" yourself into heaps of trouble.

What would've happened if you were in your battle dress? Well, you probably would have hurt your pride more than anything else.

It is true, especially during summer months, that full battle dress is uncomfortable to say the least. So, just modify it a little. After all, I'd take sweat over surgery any day. You too? Remember, some protection is better than none at all. I always wear steel toed high-top boots, long pants, helmet, and gloves. Why the gloves? What's the first thing you put out in front of you when you fall? Right! On cement, even if you aren't moving, your hands are bound to take abuse should you fall. For me, I'd rather have a layer of leather take the scrapes, thank you. The helmet? Well, its nickname (brain bucket) kind of explains it all. As for long pants, I know road rash is no fun. High-top, steel toed boots save your feet from becoming stubs.

It's truly up to you. Some states are different than others when it comes to requiring safety clothing for cyclists. In California, it sometimes seems that all you need is your birthday suit.

So, what should be done while riding, and what did the "*YOU*" in this little scenario do wrong besides being dressed to go for a swim?

- Always pay attention to the subject at hand, which is riding your bike. It doesn't hurt to drive for everyone else too. Anticipating and predicting other motorists' actions may just save your backside. "*YOU*" was more concerned about watching his speedometer needle rising to 55.

- Always have a planned way out (escape) of any situation you're in, or could be in while riding your motorcycle. "*YOU's*" way out was a six-pack!

- Stay a minimum of two seconds behind vehicles in front of you and constantly scan 12 seconds ahead of you to identify possible hazards, and avoid or prepare for them if necessary. Only a glance at your speedometer is needed, not fixation.

- Most situations occurring while riding a motorcycle require immediate response. At times, not even a second is available for contemplative thought. Ninety percent of all cyclists involved in accidents did nothing before their mishap (i.e. braking, countersteering, etc.).

- If you have doubts whether a motorist sees you or not, assume he doesn't.

- Above all else, drinking and driving is stupid. Drinking and riding is suicide.

Have fun while riding, but remember that during your years of motorcycling, the odds are you will have an accident . . . BE READY!

tech DOUBLE TECH WITH TSGT RON LATHROP

COMMENT: GRRRR!!!! The article "Dirt's the Enemy" in the August 1984 issue of *DRIVER* left me with many questions: What is a finish cleaner? What is a finish polish? What are brand name examples? What is the difference between cleaner, polish and rubbing compound?

I thought car washing consisted of a bucket of soap suds, a sponge used in circular motions, a chamois cloth and wax. Apparently there's more to it, but you only scratched the surface. How about some more information for the not-so-enlightened car washers like myself.

REPLY: Actually, when it comes to car washing the idea is to NOT scratch the surface. And that's one of the problems with rubbing compounds: They can be very abrasive, while cleaners aren't at all. Almost any company that makes one of the products makes the others also. Therefore it becomes a matter of reading the labels to find out exactly what you're buying. Or better yet, find a good auto parts store with helpful counter personnel and get their advice. Body shop personnel might also be helpful, but they're used to buying their materials in bulk from firms that may not have retail brand names.

COMMENT: I would like some information on the EGR valve on my 1974 car. I bought my car new in 1974. Last week some one told me of changing my EGR valve because the valve was good for only 50,000 miles. I have 171,000 miles on my '74. I replaced the EGR valve myself and when I went to attach the rubber hose to the end of the EGR valve I noticed a small BB stuck inside the hose, blocking it. I thought this was kind of strange and could not for the life of me understand why the BB was stuck in the hose. Can you please explain to me what happened? I do not know who put it there or how long it has been there. My main concern is whether the car will run better plugged or not plugged.

REPLY: Apparently at one time or another you complained to a mechanic about your car's lack of power or poor fuel economy. To solve your problem, the mechanic plugged the tube connecting the Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) valve to a timed port in the carburetor.

When working properly, EGR lowers peak combustion chamber temperatures. Reduced combustion chamber temperatures are desirable in reducing exhaust emissions, detonation and/or preignition. However, EGR does reduce fuel economy and performance.

To minimize the trade-offs, EGR is regulated for various engine operating conditions by vacuum. At idle, where combustion temperatures and fuel consumption are low and smooth performance is desirable, EGR is not allowed to dilute the fuel mixture. At wide open throttle or when the demand on the engine is high (heavy loads), maximum power is desirable so EGR again is not allowed to dilute the fuel mixture.

Since EGR is a temperature-related function, the absence of proper EGR valve control will obviously increase peak combustion chamber temperatures. Such temperatures may increase octane requirements significantly and cause detonation. Component overheating (valves, piston domes, cylinder walls and spark plugs) may incite preignition which generally yields costly engine damage.

As you can see, if the EGR valve isn't working properly (as in your case, where the line was plugged) its efforts may be counterproductive and create some very undesirable effects.

There is some additional confusion about the lifespan of emission control components such as the EGR valve. The government requires that emissions controls work for at least 50,000 miles and be covered by a warranty. Some people think this means that the components are only good for 50,000 miles. Of course, this is not true; many of the components will outlast the vehicle.

In your case, you could have tested the EGR valve by opening the throttle to just above idle (1200-1500 rpm). If the valve was working properly, the valve shaft would have moved up to the open position and lowered when the rpm was reduced to idle. This test should be done every 12,000 miles or once a year.

COMMENT: With all safety concerns about using jumper cables, why don't you recommend using the jumpers that run from one cigarette lighter to another?

REPLY: Probably because they're a waste of money.

You see, a battery is a store of chemical energy that it converts into electrical energy. A battery that has been drained of some of this energy (as long as it isn't completely dead) will regenerate itself given a little time and no further loss.

For example, say it's a cold morning with the temperature hovering at zero degrees Fahrenheit. At this temperature a fully charged battery has lost 60 percent of the power it had when the temperature was at 80 above. Also at zero the engine requires two and a half times as much starting power as at 80.

You go out to start the car, but the engine just won't catch. As you crank away the starter turns slower and slower

until it won't turn at all. You go back into the house to warm up and return a few minutes later. What happens when you turn the key? The starter again turns the engine over because the battery has converted some more of the stored chemical energy into electricity.

This is what the cigarette lighter to cigarette lighter cables depend on for their "jump." There's no way for the energy to get from one battery to another through the cigarette lighters in an amount that would do any good. But by the time you've located the cigarette lighter cables and somebody with a running car to get a jump from, the battery may have rejuvenated itself enough to make a difference and leave you with the impression of a "jump."

Your best bet is to stick to a good set of regular jumper cables. Hook one end of one cable to the positive (+) terminal of the "dead" battery and the other end of the same cable (they are usually color coordinated) to the positive (+) terminal of the "good" battery. Then connect the other cable. First one end to the negative (-) terminal of the "good" battery and the other end of the same cable to a good ground such as the engine block or frame of the "dead" car.

Make this final connection as far as possible from the "dead" battery. When the final connection is made there is a small spark. This spark could cause a battery to explode. If the connections aren't right, there will be a large flaming spark that could cause both batteries to explode.

You're now ready to attempt the jump start. I recommend that the car giving the jump to the dead car not be running. If there is a major problem in the "dead" car's electrical system it could also seriously damage the jumping car's electronics. If you're only using the jumping car's battery (the ignition switch off, and key removed) then the only thing ruined would be the battery.

Once the jump is completed, or you've decided that more than a jump is needed, disconnect the cables in the reverse order of connection. First remove the grounded connection and then the other end from the "good" battery's negative (-) terminal. Then the other cable from the positive (+) terminals.

COMMENT: Yesterday I drove my motorcycle back from lunch and when I went out after work the battery was completely dead. So dead, in fact, that it wouldn't even spark with the dead short between the terminals. That evening I came back with a pickup truck to pick up the motorcycle. When I put the key in the switch, the neutral light came on, and there was enough power in the battery that we were able to push, bump start the bike. The battery took a charge over night. How's this possible?

REPLY: Since you're writing from a southern California base during a time when the temperatures were well above 100 degrees, the battery probably overheated and buckled. Once it buckled, it short-circuited itself and acted "dead." When it cooled down and unbuckled, the chemical action returned to normal and produced the electricity you noted that evening.

If there is anything batteries hate as much as cold, it is heat. Heat increases the chemical activity of the electrolyte (an acid solution), speeds up corrosion of the grids, damages and buckles plates, and softens and chars the separators. Heat also causes the water in the electrolyte to evaporate faster, making the remaining acid more concentrated. This more concentrated electrolyte is harmful to the plates and separators as well as having an increased electrical resistance which causes further overheating.

That's why the battery is located in as cool a place as possible. Unfortunately, there isn't as much room to do this on motorcycles as there is in four-wheeled vehicles.

As long as the subject is batteries and temperatures, we might as well talk about the other end of the scale: cold. I've already pointed out the decrease in battery power coupled with the increased demand that results when temperatures drop.

Another problem that develops when the mercury drops too low is freezing. If the electrolyte freezes, the ice dislodges the active material from the plates, buckles the plates and cracks the container, ruining the battery.

A fully charged battery won't freeze until the temperature reaches about 85 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. A battery that is only half charged will freeze at 15 below. One that is three-quarters discharged (25 percent charged) will freeze at five above zero while a completely discharged battery will freeze at 20 degrees above.

A word of caution about adding water to a battery in very cold weather. Do it just before the car is driven so that it can immediately mix with the electrolyte. Otherwise the water, being lighter than the electrolyte, will stay on the top and freeze, even in a fully charged battery.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *If you have a general interest automotive question that you would like answered, and feel that others could use the knowledge too, send it to:*

Double Tech
DRIVER Magazine
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People rarely have long, involved reasons for not wearing seat belts. Most often, their reasons are short, to-the-point, and not very well thought out. They are simply excuses. The real reasons, we believe, are 1) people really don't think they will be involved in an accident, and 2) they just don't want to think about it.

What these people are doing is gambling. Although many of them would not think of putting hard-earned money on a roulette table, they gamble daily with their lives and health by not taking the short time and small effort required to buckle a seat belt.

Actually, the odds are in their favor. The odds are they won't have an accident. But if they do, and they are not buckled in, the odds are they will suffer injury, possibly serious injury, possibly even death. None of that seems to have any effect on the majority of the driving population, and they cling to their excuses. Some of these excuses sound rational (even though they are not), and all are bad reasons for avoiding a device that is truly life-saving.

Since each of these excuses is simplistic, we have given a simplistic, emotional response, and we have followed up with some facts for a more moderate reaction. See how many of these excuses for skipping the seat belts you have heard — or even how many you have used yourself.

"They're uncomfortable."

So is a busted face when you hit the windshield. Your choice is a little — a very little — discomfort now by wearing the belt, or a lot of discomfort later in the hospital. Get serious!

Okay, Seriously, people complain about the comfort of belts, but today's belts are really quite comfortable. The problem is that people are not used to them. If they become accustomed to seat belts they won't be comfortable *without* them. People say they don't like being confined, but the belts are adjustable and do not interfere with movement. They will allow you to bend forward to reach any of the controls on the instrument panel, and they will retract easily when you sit back. A lot of people fasten the belt and then slip their arm out of the shoulder harness. This is dangerous, because it eliminates the protection the harness provides — that of keeping your face away from the dashboard.

"I'm afraid they won't work."

Oh, yeah? Well, they made them simple enough for you to buckle all by yourself, they surely made them simple enough to work when they're needed.

The ease with which they move sometimes makes the wearer wonder if they will work when they are supposed to. The systems that are belt-sensitive will lock up easily when you move quickly or pull sharply on the belt and it feeds out more rapidly than it is designed. For the car-sensitive systems, those that lock up when the car slows suddenly, you can test by braking suddenly from a moderate speed. The belts will lock up and prevent you from hitting the steering wheel. By the way, do this only on a straight, level, dry road with no nearby traffic.

"They might hurt me."

You ought to worry about something that will really hurt — hitting the steering wheel and the dashboard with your mouth. The belt isn't going to hurt your precious little bod.

Some people are afraid the seatbelts might injure them in an accident. If you are thrown into the restraining safety of a seat belt at 30, 40 or 50 miles per hour, yes, you might suffer some bruises. But those minor injuries are nothing compared to the trauma of hitting the wheel, dashboard, or other passengers, to say nothing of being thrown out.

"It's better to be thrown clear."

Didn't we just say "to say nothing of being thrown out"? Being "thrown clear of the crash" is a myth. If you get thrown out of the car because you aren't wearing your belt, you will find out just how fragile your body is. The trouble with that lesson is that you won't live to make use of the knowledge.

The fact is, you are 25 times more likely to be killed if you are thrown out of an automobile during an accident than if you remain inside. The human body just is not built to withstand high-speed impact with hard objects. For more information on this, see "The Second Collision" in the December 1984 DRIVER.

"I can hold myself out of harm's way."

Who do you think you are? Arnold Schwartzenegger? Well, even he couldn't brace himself from hitting the windshield in anything but accidents at the slowest of speeds.

Another really dangerous idea is that a person can brace himself against a crash. However, this faith in one's phy-

sical strength doesn't stand up to the facts. In a crash at the moderate speed of 30 mph, a human body is hit with the force equal to 30 times its own weight. Nobody can hold that much weight, even for an instant.

"I could be trapped in the car."

Boy, you've been watching too much television. You worry about things that don't happen very often and you ignore things that happen every day — like people dying because they didn't buckle their belts.

Many people have an unrealistic fear that they might be trapped in a burning car or a car submerged under water. The truth is that less than one half of one percent of accidents involve fire or submersion. People who use this argument are worried about being knocked unconscious and unable to get out of the car. They are much more likely to be knocked unconscious if they don't wear belts. Seat belts and shoulder harnesses keep your body from hitting interior car surfaces so that you remain conscious and able to release the belt.

"I'm not going very far."

No, and if you don't buckle that belt you'll get a free ride to the hospital or the morgue someday.

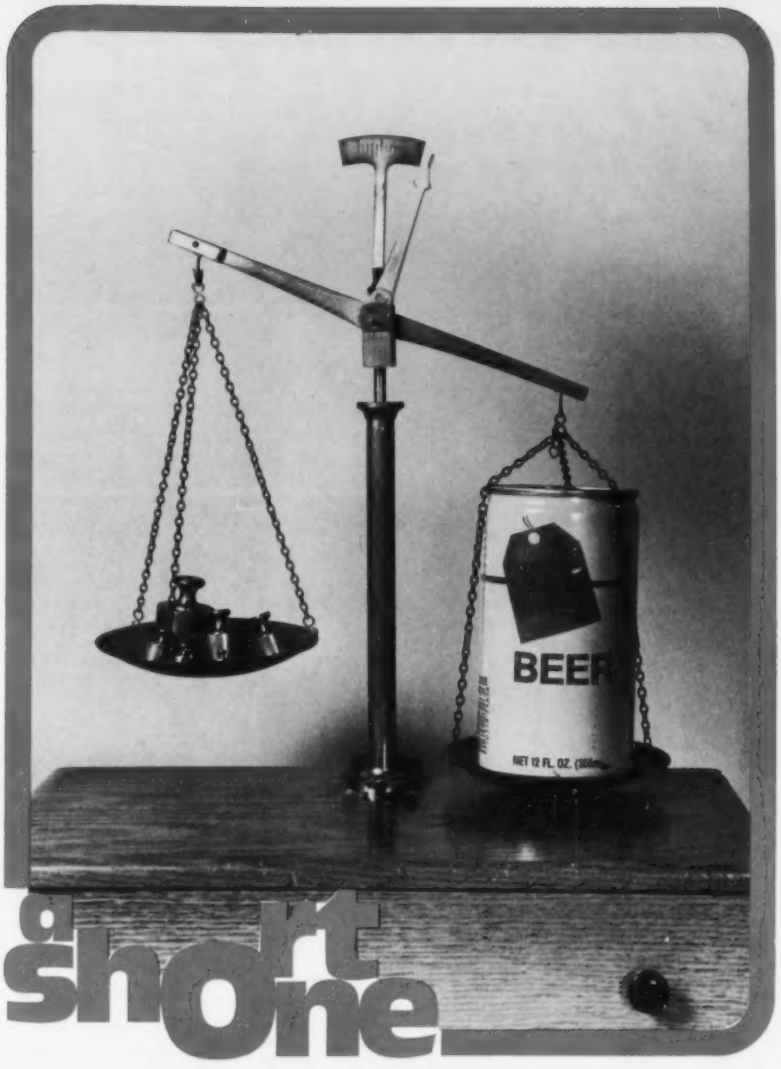
The length of the trip doesn't matter (See "Short Trips" in this issue). You need your seat belts at all times. Most accidents happen within 25 miles of home, and 80 percent of all accidents happen at 40 mph or less. Obviously, it's the short trip that is the most dangerous.

"I'm a good driver."

So what? Are you totally in control of everything around you? What about that idiot who got drunk at the bar and is bearing down on you at 70 mph? If you're a good driver, be a responsible one too, and buckle that belt.

Some people think it is an insult to the driver to use a seat belt, and that a driver who uses a belt has no faith in his own driving skill. That's foolish. No matter how good a driver is, he can't control everything — and he especially can't control the other drivers, the ones who may *not* be so good.

And what about the classic "they-wrinkle-my-clothes" excuse? The act of sitting will wrinkle clothes, and there's no way to drive without sitting, so we don't buy that excuse. The only conclusion we can reach is that there is no good excuse for not wearing seat belts — no excuse at all.



a short one

It's been a long day at work and you are tired. The thermometer is sitting at 96, there is no breeze and sweat is running down your neck as you wait in your car for a stoplight to change. You suddenly think how good a cold beer would taste right now and you stop off at a nearby bar for a "short one."

You drink the beer and begin to feel a little cooler, so you have another. By the time you finish the second one you have successfully counteracted the heat and you feel you can make it home without your body suffering a boilover. But just to make sure, you have another "short one."

At this point, if you're an average-sized person, you have passed the Blood Alcohol Level of .05, which is halfway to the point of being legally intoxicated. In most places in this country, your condition is rated "impaired." Your reflexes are slowed, your reaction time to any emergency is lengthened, your judgment is adversely affected. In short, you are no longer a safe driver.

Does this mean that you will, without fail, have an accident on the way home? Or will you make it to your garage in one piece, as you have so often before? We'll say this much. If this is your normal way of handling a drive home on a hot summer day, if you usually stop off for a short one, you're taking a big risk.

It's like putting a lot of weight on the "accident" side of the scale.

Convicted of over-acting, they were sentenced to public affairs jobs from which they promptly escaped. Today they survive as problem solvers. If you have an automobile safety problem, and nobody else can help, and if you can find them, maybe you can hire the D-Team.

SCENE ONE

A sub-compact car is churning up clouds of dust as it flies down a gravel road. Suddenly the left idler arm breaks and the left front wheel flops helplessly to the left, pulling the car across the road toward a pond. The driver slams on the brakes and turns the steering wheel to the right. But because of the broken part only the right wheel follows suit. The vehicle plows across the gravel stopping just off the shoulder, inches from the water with the front wheels pointed in different directions.

Unable to release her grip, the driver slumps forward onto the steering wheel, shaking. When the shaking subsides, she looks up toward the ultra-busy, five-lane highway she was headed for. She imagines what would have happened in that traffic had the defective part waited only a few more minutes before failing.

SCENE TWO

The petite brunette driver walks briskly into the mall book store and heads directly to the mystery shelves. Stopping beside the six-foot hunk who has his face buried in a Nero Wolfe novel, she says, "Mr. Johnson, you're a hard man to find."

Without glancing from the pages, the hunk says, "Alexander is on the other side of these shelves."

"Looker," a voice comes from behind the shelves, "what's the lady want?"

"I want to hire the D-Team," she replies as she tries to peer over the shelves. "There have been a lot of accidents. Accidents that we believe have been caused by vehicle defects. We want to know which parts are causing these accidents and who's responsible for them."

By now Looker has replaced his book and moved to the opposite side of the shelves. Looking down at the brunette and smiling approvingly, he says, "Sounds like a challenge to me."

Alexander Johnson, leering from the aisle side of the shelves, replies, "We can conduct inspections after accidents and at random roadblocks to uncover any existing technical defects, establish their roles in causing accidents, evaluate where responsibility lies and to what degree the defects should have been apparent."

SCENE THREE

As a slightly-built black man in rolled-cuffed blue jeans, black leather *Members Only* jacket and Beechnut Tobacco baseball cap strolls into the garage followed by his accomplice, Alexander asks, "What did you two find?"

"We inspected more than 28,000 vehicles at various road blocks," ET reports. "Two-thirds of them were two-

wheelers, a quarter passenger cars and the rest buses, trucks, semitrailer tractors, trailers and semitrailers."

ET's companion, Mad Sarge, suddenly realizes that the black man has stopped in front of him, and he makes "Chippa chippa" noises as he attempts to avoid running into ET. But, of course, it's too late.

"Whatchya doin', fool?" ET snaps as he turns on his heel.

"I wanted you to inspect my Moto Guzzi," comes his reply.

"You ain't got no motorcycle, fool," ET disagrees, "That's a chair."

ET is right. Mad Sarge is sitting on a four-wheel, rocking desk chair holding his arms out in front of him as if they were hanging on a window sill and making sounds like, "pock-splat-pock-splat."

"You look like a dog hanging out of a car window," ET continues. "Besides you ain't dressed to ride no motorcycle." The Mad Sarge is wearing go-aheads (shower thongs), maroon swimming trunks, and an old, clashing red Linda Ronstadt T-shirt. "You are a Foolglide In Red," ET concludes.

"Hush, ET," Mad Sarge pleades. "Motorcycles got feelings too: Glides is Harleys; this here's a Moto Guzzi."

"I'll moto your guzzi" ET guarantees Mad Sarge as he reaches down for the seated man's neck.

But before he can get a grip, Mad Sarge spins the chair around and makes an escape, trailing the sounds "Wow-wow-eeeek-wowwow-eeeekwowowow-eek," with ET chasing him.

The brunette asks Looker, "Do you call him 'ET' because he's a small, different sort?"

"No," Looker replies, "ET is for Even Temper."

"Looker," Alexander interview, "Get those two and start inspecting vehicles at the scene of accidents or as soon afterwards as possible."

SCENE FOUR

A motorcycle is speeding down a narrow road through a forest. Up ahead is a small backhoe (tractor with a power shovel on the rear) traveling in the same direction. The motorcycle and rider smash into the rear of the power shovel.

The D-Team's specially equipped van rushes up to the scene and the team members pile out and start inspecting the damaged motorcycle.

While ET spins the rear wheel, Mad Sarge presses down on the foot pedal: Rear wheel brake wear is so great that the pedal can be depressed all the way to its mechanical stop without any effect.

Up front, Looker examines the front handlebar where an emergency repair job on the throttle has routed the cable over the front brake lever hindering its operation.

At other accident scenes the D-Team members find damaged two-wheelers with: knurled nut to hold a tire valve loosened; valve to a rear tire's inner tube sheared off; backing to brake lining worn thin long after brake lining itself has been used up; lack of brake pad in front brake; lack of mounting bolt through hand brake lever; brake cable of front wheel broken off; brake linkage disconnected; axle held in place by electrical wire instead of nut; household wire running from ignition wire to spark plug; spring in left tube of front fork broken; seized piston, and a drive chain off sprocket.

SCENE FIVE

After coming down a long hill, a car comes off the road towards the left, crashing against a tree there. The D-Team van pulls up and they start going over the wrecked vehicle.

ET pulls off the right front wheel and Mad Sarge puts a finger into the leaking brake fluid that's all over the rotor. Removing the caliper they find it leaking fluid onto both pads.

At different accidents the Team finds cars with: a tire destroyed by inadequate air pressure; a tire cable cut through by a damaged rim; wheel lug holes enlarged because of inadequate wheel bolt tightening; a brake plunger that fell out because of a broken adjuster; cracked brake disc; brake disc completely separated from hub

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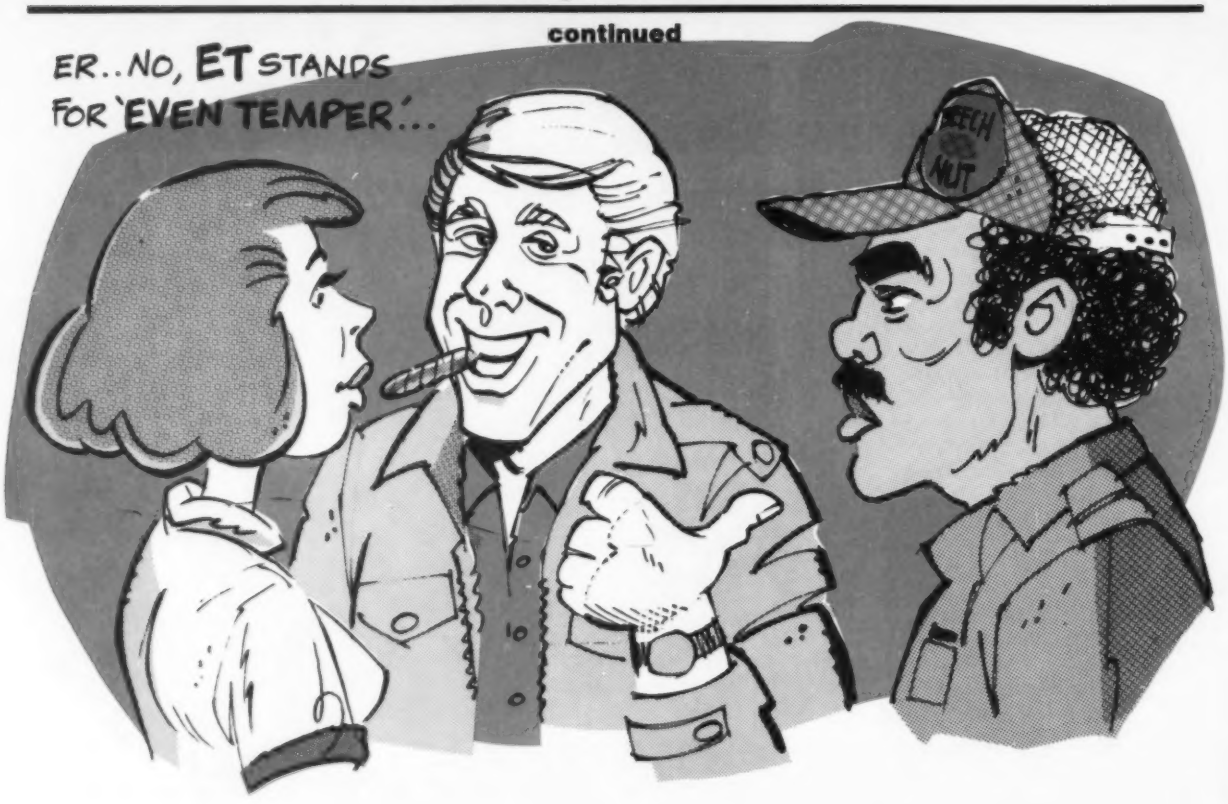

by wear; disconnected brake line; brake line rusted through; brake hose worn through by rubbing against body; broken spring in McPherson strut; rear axle mount rusted through; defective battery clamp that led to lighting failure; spindle to steering gear broken off, and broken steering gear housing.

SCENE SIX

A tractor/trailer that is proceeding along a two-lane highway swerves suddenly into the opposite lane and collides with an oncoming vehicle. The D-Team members unbuckle their safety belts and, dazed, stagger out of their wrecked van.

Alexander and Looker stare at a badly worn and weakened tire carcass on the tractor/trailer's left front that had overheated from driving with too little pressure, disintegrated around the bead and suddenly lost air.

Meanwhile, ET and Mad Sarge pull the stunned truck driver from his cab and proceed to physically explain to him their dissatisfaction with the care he has taken of his vehicle.

At other commercial vehicle accident scenes they find: bolt holes enlarged by inadequately tightened wheel nuts; bolt holes in rim torn open; front tire blown out due to vehicle overloading; brake hoses burst open; brake lever slid down, and compressor line slid off.

ET pulls off the right front wheel and Mad Sarge puts a finger into the leaking brake fluid that's all over the rotor. Removing the caliper they find it leaking fluid onto both pads.

SCENE SEVEN

ET hauls another arm-load of reports into the office and dumps them onto a pile that already stacks from the floor to above the level of the computer screen and is wide enough to block the passage between the console and the book shelves that form a room divider. Trapped in the back corner by the mass of paperwork, Looker and the brunette pay little attention to the arrival of another load as they slowly read individual folders.

The phone rings and ET picks it up saying, " 'Lo." After a pause, he holds it out and says, "It's Alexander for you, fool."

Mad Sarge's arm comes out from under the heap of reports, grabs the receiver and pulls it back into the pile.

"Two-wheelers?" Mad Sarge replies to a question asked over the telephone by Alexander. His hands reappear as he punches information into the computer to get the answer to that question and the others that follow.

"More than half inspected after accidents had defects. . . . Nine percent of the defects caused the accidents. . . . All the defects that caused the accidents were in their brake systems. . . . Motorcycles were in better condition than mopeds. Some 80 percent of the mopeds had serious defects. . . . Mainly the brake systems and tires were inadequate. But electronical systems also ranked high. . . . Whenever a vehicle had defects, an average of more than three parts per vehicle were found to be inadequate.

"Looker, he wants to talk to you."

Caught off guard, Looker almost spills his tea as he fumbles to pick up on his

extension before Mad Sarge returns the other headset to the cradle. The puzzled appearance of Looker's face changes with relief as the conversation proceeds.

"Looker here. . . . No, you called me. . . . Lunch? How about Flackey's?"

With that there's a "WowowowowowowOWOW" as the stack of papers scatters in every direction and Mad Sarge speeds out of the room on his chair.

SCENE EIGHT

Alexander sits in the corner under the 1940's movie posters finishing a neatly built burger while the brunette gently pokes at her taco salad with a plastic fork and stares out the window behind Looker. Looker is trying to appear suave as he fights a losing battle with a juicy half-pound burger, and ET puts the finishing touches to assemblying a guacamole burger.

"I'm sorry," Alexander says, "although there've been a lot of accidents, only 6.4 percent of all passenger car accidents were caused by defects."

"Well," the slim brunette murmurs, "of those accidents that were caused by defects, what defects caused most of them?"

"In general," Alexander notes while he looks for Mad Sarge in the crowd, "brakes and tires are the components whose failure most frequently causes accidents. They account for about 90 percent of the accident-causing defects."

"In general," Alexander notes while he looks for Mad Sarge in the crowd, "brakes and tires are the components whose failure most frequently causes accidents. They account for about 90 percent of the accident-causing defects."

"Brakes?" she asks.

"Yes," Alexander continues, "52.7 percent of the defects that caused accidents in passenger cars were proven to be brake defects."

"Was there any one component that led to more brake-caused accidents than another?" the woman inquires.

"Actually, wear and service were found to be the problem in nearly 40 percent of the defects that caused brake failure and impaired braking action," Alexander replies. "ET has prepared a list of the individual technical defects by brake parts groups that caused accidents."

"That's a long list," she remarks, seeing the list as ET hands it to her (see *Brake Failure Groups*).

While the brunette studies the list, Alexander goes to the aid of Mad Sarge, who has set himself, his two bacon/chili/grilled onion burgers, five orders of french fries and six long-neck beers down at a table with half a dozen redneck real men. ET is pretending not to know Mad Sarge in hopes of being able to finish his burger in peace.

SCENE NINE

"Tires," she says. "Tires were also mentioned as a major defect leading to accidents. Do you have more facts?"

Glancing around the room, Looker reaches into his sports coat and produces a folded stack of papers and passes it across the table to her as he leans forward, whispering, "I went through a lot to get these for you . . . "

"Looker!" Alexander snaps discour-

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"Driving with too little tire pressure, thereby placing excessive mechanical and thermal stress on the tires is one of the errors committed most commonly by vehicle owners and drivers."

agingly across the room. "The lady is paying for results, not adventure stories."

Looker backs off a bit and continues, "About 36.8 percent of the defects causing accidents in passenger cars were proven to be tire defects. This is based mainly on these special tire reports from experts.

"Tire damage has to be closely evaluated to determine whether it is to be considered a cause or an effect of an accident. Then, once tire damage has been proven to be a cause of the accident, the question still has to be addressed as to who is responsible for the damage.

"The most common causes of tire failure are summarized on this list," Looker adds handing her another list.

"This is another long list," she observes as she reads it (see *Tire Defects*).

After refolding the list and placing it with the other reports, the slender brunette asks, "Who's at fault?"

"As far as responsibility is concerned," Looker answers, "one can say that a lack of maintenance is usually to be found; this means that usually the owner or driver provoked the tire failure through neglect.

"In the case of damage from tire mounting or repair, it is not always possible to distinguish between damage done in service facilities and damage done by do-it-yourselfers.

"Driving with too little tire pressure, thereby placing excessive mechanical and thermal stress on the tires is one of the errors committed most commonly by vehicle owners and drivers," Looker concludes.

A commotion interrupts the conversation as Mad Sarge makes a dash for the door after pouring a couple of long necks into the pants pockets of the "real men" on either side of him. "Aren't you going to help him?" Alexander yells at ET.

Looking out the window, ET replies, "Nope. That fool's out-running them in his chair."

Sure enough, Mad Sarge is leaving the running rednecks behind as he navigates his chair into the left-turn-only lane of the five-lane highway in front of the restaurant.

SCENE TEN

Turning to Alexander, the brunette says, "Looker says that the owners and drivers are usually at fault when tire failures cause accidents. Who's responsible for accidents caused by brake defects?"

"Clearly," Alexander replies as he approaches the table, "owners and drivers are also responsible for most technical defects classed as accident causes. Errors made during mounting of parts and during repairs are the second most common cause. Unfortunately we could not determine what percentage of errors could be attributed to improper repairs by the owners themselves."

SCENE ELEVEN

When Alexander, Looker, ET and the brunette walk back into the office, Mad Sarge is busy working at the computer. None of them realize that they haven't seen the thousands of reports except Alexander. He says, "Where are those reports?" and then makes his way to the opening between the file cabinets and book shelves that forms his office. Finding it filled desk high with neat stacks of folders, Alexander says, "Never mind," as he glares at Mad Sarge.

"You were going to ask if there were any other areas besides brakes and tires that you could concentrate on to prevent defect-caused accidents," Alexander guesses as he turns around to face the slender woman.

"Why . . . yes," she concedes.

"We've coined the term 'degree of jeopardy,' " he continues as ET backsteps into the doorway, blocking Mad Sarge's attempted escape.

"Degree of jeopardy?" she asks.

As ET turns Mad Sarge around in his chair to face the boss, Alexander answers the brunette. "The degree of jeopardy shows how many vehicles would have accidents in a year because of technical defects if each model year had the same number of vehicles."

"Let me guess," the brunette interrupts. "The risk of having a traffic accident with a passenger car caused by its technical defects increases with the car's age?"

"Right," Alexander continues as Looker moves his chair over in front of the computer and starts stroking the keys. "The degree of jeopardy is significant when a vehicle reaches about four years old."

TIRE DEFECTS

This is the list of tire defects, or in some cases the appearance left by the actual causes, that Looker gave to the brunette.

- impact marks
- rubbing contact
- cut through to the fabric
- inadequate pressure or overload
- old cuts
- cracks from aging
- fabric breakage
- impaired adhesion
- damage during mounting
- defect in belt
- defect in bead wire
- leaky inner tube
- leaky valve seat
- leaky valve insert
- fabric or ply misalignment
- defect in carcass fabric
- excessive basic thickness (on retreads)

"The degree of jeopardy with cars that are six to eight years old is about four times as large as with cars that are two years old or less," Looker explains, pointing to a graph on the screen. "Ones that are 12 to 14 years old have a risk about 10 times as large. It also becomes evident that the degree of jeopardy levels off after about seven years, only to rise again at a vehicle age of 12 years.

"Why's that?" she asks.

Looker and Alexander both glance to ET, who volunteers, "Because the repair work necessary to obtain an inspection sticker is just enough to keep it safe. However, the potential accident risk is still very high. Experience has shown that a certain 'neglect mentality' hinders maintenance. This is especially true whenever the owner anticipates selling the vehicle or it gets very old."

"That's not the way you talk to Mad Sarge," the brunette observes.

"I only talk that way," ET replies, "because that's what he expects."

SCENE TWELVE

Mad Sarge has managed to get his chair into the hall and, standing in front of it, is madly stomping one leg up and down, making "Chuckatah, chuckatah" sounds as if he were attempting to kick start a motorcycle's engine.

"Are we in danger of having other vehicles, such as trucks with defects, involve us in accidents?" the brunette asks.

"About 59 percent of the buses, trucks and truck-tractors that we inspected had defects. And about 66 percent of the trailers and semi-trailers had them," ET replies. Likewise, the percentage of all defects that caused accidents is high in both cases at about 36 and 26 percent."

"In other words," the woman adds, "commercial vehicles have the highest percentages of accident-causing defects."

"Those aren't the other words," ET continues, "Those *are* the words. On the average, about 21 to 23 percent of all the vehicles inspected had accident-causing defects.

"With commercial vehicles," he concludes, "it is primarily their brake systems that cause accidents. All other parts groups — even tires — appear insignificant beside brakes."

He is interrupted by Mad Sarge who is pleading, "Help me get my bike started, ET. Kick it over."

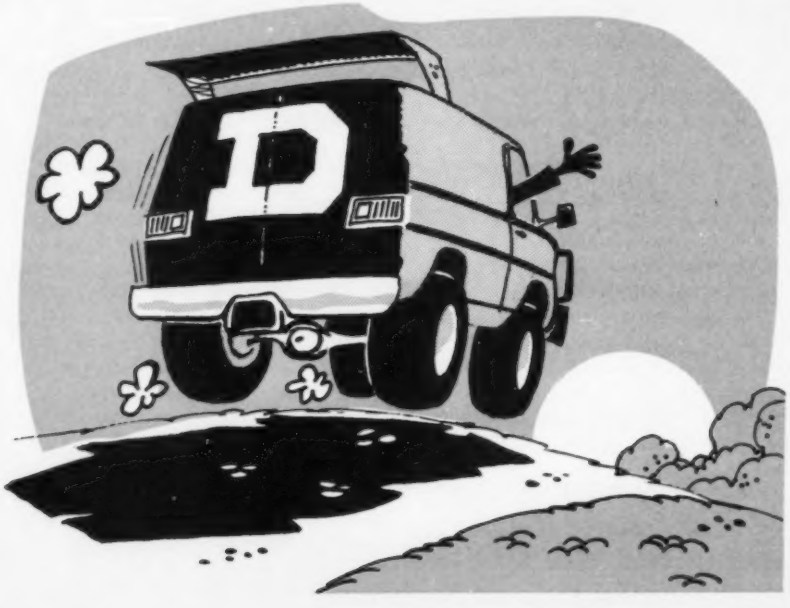
ET glances first at Looker and then Alexander. When they both shrug their shoulders, he gives the chair one swooping kick with his leg and sends it tumbling down the hall and crashing into a drinking fountain.

Mad Sarge goes yelling after the chair, crying about how insensitive some people are.

"He's crazy," ET complains to Alexander.

"He sure is," the brunette observes, "Nobody in his right mind would ride a motorcycle dressed like that."

Special thanks to the real "D-Team," DEKRA, the German Motor Vehicle Inspection Association, and Jurgen Grandel for publishing their findings in SAE Paper 850434, "Investigation of the Technical Defects Causing Motor Vehicle Accidents.



BRAKE FAILURE GROUPS

This is the list of individual technical defects — by parts groups — that caused accidents that ET handed the slender brunette.

Wear (38%)

- brake lining wear requiring excessive plunger travel in wheel brake cylinders
- impaired braking action caused by excessive lining wear
- lining wear on front axle causing overbraking of rear axle
- brake disc broken as a result of excessive wear

Brake lines and brake hoses (20.35%)

- brake lines rusty and leaking
- brake lines screwed on wrong and leaking
- brake hoses leaking from age
- brake hoses mounted wrong so as to rub and break open

Master brake cylinder and reservoir (16.8%)

- primary seal leaking
- secondary seal leaking
- refill bore obstructed
- non-return valve obstructed or defective
- dirt deposits in master brake cylinder

Brake caliper and wheel brake cylinder (16.75%)

- brake caliper housing leaking
- wheel brake cylinder leaking
- plungers jammed in wheel brake cylinder
- hair-sized cracks in wheel brake cylinder
- brake pads rusted in place

Brake pedal and actuation mechanism (1.3%)

- push rod between brake pedal and master brake cyclinder broken
- brake cylinder broken

Others (6.8%)

- brake pressure limiter leaking
- linkage disconnected from brake pressure limiter
- front axle converted to disc brakes without modifying master brake cylinder accordingly
- brake booster defects

BACKFIRE

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Editor
DRIVER Magazine
AFISC/SEDD
Norton AFB CA 92409

Address your letters to:

Editor
DRIVER Magazine
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Norton AFB CA 92409

MARATHON DRIVERS

Your May article "Overextension" is one of the most complete articles on the subject of what I call marathon driving. I've crossed the country several times as a marathon driver and haven't been involved in an accident — yet.

When people must make long drives they should follow the suggestions recommended in the Overextension article. Catching a few hours sleep at a rest stop can make a world of difference. With a family, however, it isn't always that simple. A night in a motel might be the better option.

Not only is it frustrating to stop after sunset to find no vacancies at family motels; it's also expensive. A marathon driver will usually stop after sunset and plan to be on the road again before sunrise. During the long daylight hours of summer this could mean a motel stay of eight hours. If all the inexpensive motels are full your only choice is an expensive chain motel. Paying $50 for an eight-hour stay — especially when the pool's closed — defeats the money saving aspect of marathon driving. As the May article suggests, stop earlier, have dinner, and relax.

When I decide to drive long distances in a short period of time I break up the trip with stops at nearby parks, local attractions, and even shopping malls (which for the most part are located near major interstate highways) when time permits. I try to overcome my "point A-to-point B, no stops in between" attitude. Besides, it's a great way to see the country.

1st Lt. Kevin R. Austra, USA
Fort Stewart, GA 31314

STAY AWAY FROM MOTORCYCLES

I read your TRUE ACCIDENTS column every issue and with regret I read of all the people killed riding motorcycles. Regardless of the circumstances or whose fault it is when you are killed it really doesn't matter what the circumstances were. The only reason I write this is to urge anyone contemplating buying a motorcycle not to. They offer no protection and if you are in an accident it will more often than not be a serious one. In the Air Force people are the most important resource, stay alive, drive safely and stay away from motorcycles.

SSgt. Frank Zenda
Yokota AB Japan

STOP PASSING THE BLAME

For over 10 years I have been driving, eight years on motorcycles. I have had several minor accidents, one major, and countless close encounters. After reading about so many accidents and *motorcycle tips* and such from yours and every other driving magazine for many years, I am slowly coming to one decision: True a motorcyclist must be a 100% better driver on the road just to stay alive, but the blame is constantly being passed to the motorcyclist. A motorcyclist shouldn't have to use any more care and should be able to drive with the same carefree attitude as a car driver. But he can't because most automobile drivers constantly infringe upon his "DRIVING PRIVILEGE."

Now let's talk *ultimate blame*. The ultimate blame is still upon he who is wrong and it can't be passed off. Yet you insist extreme caution is necessary when riding. Stop trying to pass the blame. Myself and many riders feel the same way. We are tired of the blame being passed off. Putting the responsibility where it belongs would make the drivers responsible for their driving habits.

A recent AMA survey found the automobile driver to be the "Number-one road hazard" of two-wheelers. At present there are eight states doing something about this by promoting safety awareness, mostly to tell automobile drivers to look for motorcycles (which they should be doing already). So stop passing the blame and accept your own responsibility or blame for being wrong. Wake up before you kill someone, maybe even myself. Before you make another such commentary I would challenge you to ride a motorcycle at least 5000 miles in one year.

Name And Address Withheld

P.S. There is a running wager here that this letter won't be published and at 7:1 odds against.

The bottom line is this: Whether it is the motorcyclist or the driver who is at fault, in a collision between a motorcycle and a four-wheel vehicle, the rider is the loser. The laws of physics are the ones that count.

IT HAPPENED TO ME

This is one of those "it happened to me" letters, but perhaps it may show someone that those seat belts are good for something. First of all, seat belts only function in a mishap (read: crash) or near-mishap. Which brings me to the point of the letter.

One Saturday afternoon, back in November 1984, I was driving my 1982 Chevrolet Cavalier home after spending most of the afternoon working on minor routine maintenance (oil change, etc.). It was lightly raining when I headed for home and the roads were a little slippery. I stopped at a traffic light and as I remember I was putting a cassette in the tape play while waiting for the light to turn green when a car (of the big variety) without even trying to stop rear-ended me at a speed of at least 40 MPH and I suddenly found myself lying down. The force of the impact broke my seat and put me in the reclining position.

Surprised, I got out of the car and found the driver of the other car with his foot still on the accelerator . . . ACCELERATING! He had a car load of people (nine) and a car load of beer. He was drunk and said he didn't see me. One of his passengers told me it was my fault and that he was going to shoot me. The driver, realizing he was drunk and that he had no insurance, got into his car and tried to flee, only to be caught and given a free ride in a Montgomery Police car.

To make a long story short, I now own a 1985 model car. My old car has a new home at a salvage yard. It was destroyed from the doors back, including the rear window. Even though there was a lot of blood in the car that hit me, I received no injuries and no whiplash, only a few small bruises where my seat belts kept me securely in place.

SSgt. Douglas A. Holmes, USAF
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-5377

ADD ONE INGREDIENT TO RECIPE

As I was reading your magazine dated March 1985, on the back cover I read the recipe for THE SAFETY CHEF. Would it help if you could add after "Mix in heat . . . to taste;" add: "TURN ON PROPER SIGNALS," then proceed to "Place auto . . . on street"? I think it should be in there. What do you think?

Sgt. Richard B. Donnelly, USAF
Eglin AFB FL 32542-5000

Good addition to our recipe.

LEFT LANE NOT RIGHT

Your answer to "Left Lane Right" in the April 1985 issue was woefully inadequate. You implied that since the law requiring vehicles to keep right except to pass was "never known" to be enforced, then it's OK to ignore it. Not only does this answer reflect a very casual attitude towards MKC Alves' original question, but it also calls into question your entire staff's respect for the rules of the road.

Anyone who's done any amount of cross-country driving understands the hazards associated with slow drivers in the left lane. The law in question was originally designed to reduce this hazard. Whether or not the law is ever enforced is not the issue. If it were, then I suppose that drunk driving, speeding, and other such infractions of the law would be permissible as long as the police looked the other way.

We're all equals behind the wheel, and we should therefore respect the rights of others on the road. Rules of the road — even those which aren't strictly enforced — reflect the courtesies that we all should be practicing when we drive. We can't just ignore the ones we don't like.

Lt. Robert L. Robinson, USAF
Whiteman AFB, MO 65305-5000

You're right. Our short answer was not the best, especially from people who buy ink by the barrel. The problem is we don't always have the space to provide all the answers to every possible situation. For example, at the end of the article to which the original letter was referring we said, "For a more detailed look at lane positioning, see 'There Are No Absolutes' in the April 1983 DRIVER." In that story we admitted that traffic in the left lane is generally moving faster than other traffic. Here's the problem facing motorcyclists: If they ride in the right lane they have to deal with traffic coming at them from four directions; right, left, front and back. If they ride in a middle lane they are also faced with a four-front assault. However, if they ride in the left lane (and there is a substantial divider between them and on-coming traffic) they only have to deal with traffic on three sides. Now, do they drive at the speed of traffic in this left lane and chance a speeding ticket, or do they drive at the speed limit and chance being pulled over not staying right? We even know of areas where drivers are told to use the left lane and to pass on the right because of the condition of the right lane. We wish the "stay right except to pass" laws were enforced uniformly across the nation. We also wish the 55 mph speed limit was enforced. But the fact is, they aren't; and we said so. As we've said so many, many times before, when it comes to lane positioning there are no absolutes.

SEAT BELTS

With many people vacationing this time of the year you may try this approach to seat belt use:

A VACATION TRAVEL REMINDER

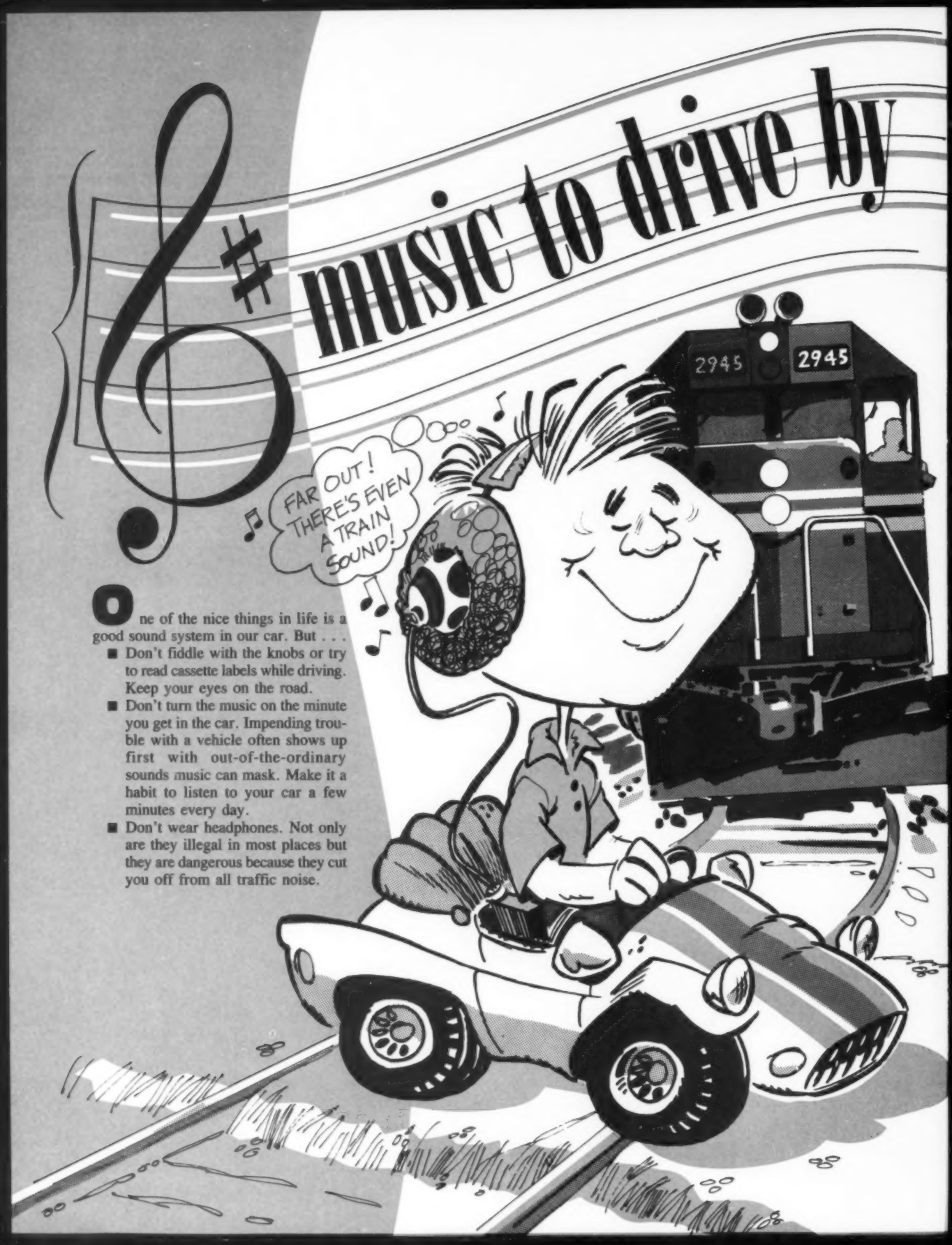
S — start
E — early
A — and
T — think
B — belts
E — enable
L — loved ones
T — to
S — survive

Hope you can find a use for this in our seat belt crusades.

SSgt. John D. Taylor, USAF
Wright-Patterson AFB, OH 45433

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1985— 583-035

music to drive by



One of the nice things in life is a good sound system in our car. But . . .

- Don't fiddle with the knobs or try to read cassette labels while driving. Keep your eyes on the road.
- Don't turn the music on the minute you get in the car. Impending trouble with a vehicle often shows up first with out-of-the-ordinary sounds music can mask. Make it a habit to listen to your car a few minutes every day.
- Don't wear headphones. Not only are they illegal in most places but they are dangerous because they cut you off from all traffic noise.